DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 207 714 PS 012 434

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TITLE Teachers as Evaluators Project: A Guide to Evaluation in the Kindergarten or Preschool.
INSTITUTION Canberra Coll. of Advanced Education (Australia).
SPONS AGENCY Australian Education Research and Development Committee, Canberra.; Curriculum Development Centre, Canberra (Australia).
PUB DATE 81
NOTE 36p.; Best copy available.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Curriculum Evaluation; *Evaluation Criteria; *Evaluation Methods; *Evaluative Thinking; Foreign Countries; Guidelines; Kindergarten; Parent Participation; Preschool Curriculum; Preschool Teachers
IDENTIFIERS *Australia

ABSTRACT

This document provides units to assist teachers and parents in evaluating kindergarten and preschool curricula. Preparing an evaluation and planning an evaluation are covered in units I and II. Two other units have been written as resource documents and present data-gathering methods and ways of reporting and using information. The authors stress that the units are not prescriptive and that they reflect only one approach to curriculum evaluation. The aim of unit I is to sharpen awareness of the procedures involved in the evaluation process at the kindergarten level; it is anticipated that a broad overview of evaluation as well as the identification of an issue or area for evaluation will be obtained upon completing the unit. The aim of unit II is to increase understanding of issues and implications when planning an evaluation; it is anticipated that a clear outline of evaluation steps will be achieved upon completing the unit. There is a clear need for a workshop leader, according to the authors, and group work is recommended when large numbers of teachers are involved. The extent of participants' experience will dictate how the material is best presented. (Author/DB)

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TEACHERS AS EVALUATORS PROJECT

A GUIDE TO EVALUATION IN THE KINDERGARTEN OR PRESCHOOL

Prepared by:

N. Russell in conjunction
with staff from the
Kindergarten Union of South Australia

1981

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT CENTRE
Canberra Australia

PS012434

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A Project jointly funded by C.D.C. & E.R.D.C.

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FOREWORD

In January 1979 the Teachers as Evaluators Project held a five-day summer school on curriculum evaluation. This summer school was led by Dr. Wynne Harlen, a visiting senior fellow from England, and was attended by some twenty-five participants, including teachers and personnel from state and territory education departments, Catholic and independent schools, and tertiary institutions in Australia and New Zealand.

The materials used at the summer school formed the basis of a five unit workshop devised later in the year for teachers in individual schools and inservice situations. These units were trialled in several Australian states and were revised in 1979 as a result of critical comments and suggestions made by workshop participants.

In June 1980 these materials were rewritten specifically for those involved with kindergartens and preschools at a writing workshop organised by the Kindergarten Union of South Australia. Following the writing workshop the materials were used in kindergartens in South Australia and further modified. An account of an evaluation in a South Australian kindergarten was written to indicate the way in which evaluation planning material was used.

The Teachers as Evaluators Project is jointly funded by the Curriculum Development Centre (C.D.C.) and the Education Research and Development Committee (E.R.D.C.) and has operated on a co-operative basis with all state and territorial education departments.

Neil Russell
Project Director

INTRODUCTION

In South Australia with its long tradition of kindergarten independence and local control the early childhood curriculum has never been prescribed by a central authority. In each kindergarten the existing curriculum is likely to have been determined by a number of factors - knowledge and expertise of present or past members of staff, the physical and social environment of the kindergarten, the influence of local advisers, the adequacy of financial resources, and many more. It does not always satisfy everyone, and it is continually changing to meet the needs of children and their families. However, it is important not to think of evaluation as merely monitoring change; as something which occurs after a decision has been taken. Rather, it is a basis for proposing changes. How change is introduced depends upon what is already in existence. Evaluation is an integral part of the curriculum process.

The value of evaluation lies in its ability to help clarify the issues facing a kindergarten and to help teachers and parents to make informed decisions. These decisions are often made on an informal, intuitive basis, rather than in a more formal manner. While there is no denying the value of this approach, it can be usefully supplemented by more systematic procedures.

The following four units:

Unit I	-	Preparing for Evaluation
Unit II	-	Planning an Evaluation
Unit III	-	Some Methods of Gathering Information
Unit IV	-	Reporting and Using Information

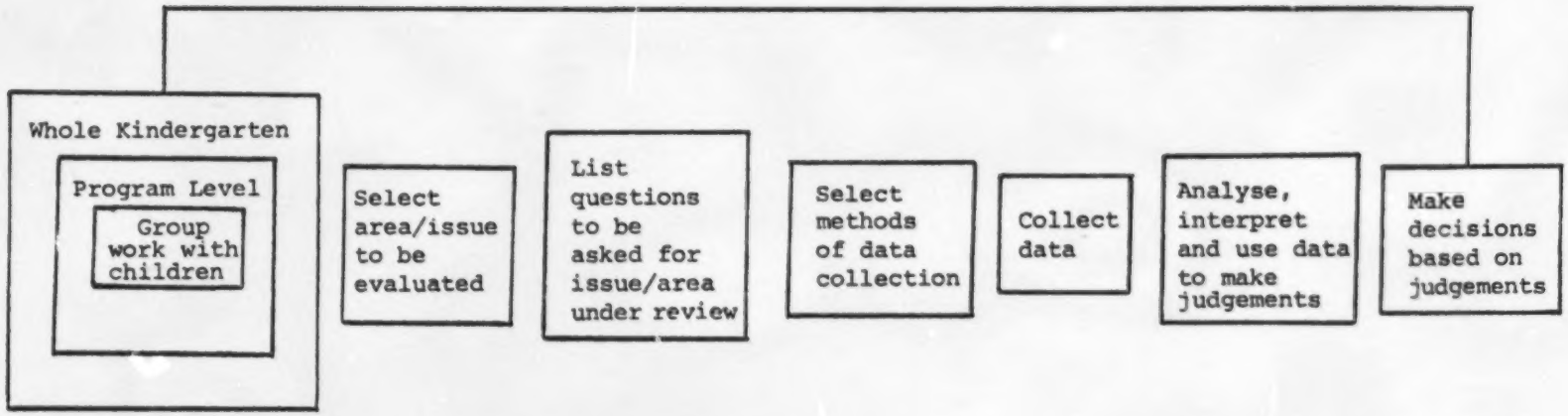
have been written to assist teachers and parents who are contemplating undertaking an evaluation. The aim of the units is to raise the level of awareness about evaluation and to provide an approach which can be adapted or modified for use by teachers in their own early childhood centre. It must be stressed that the units are not intended to be prescriptive, and only reflect one approach to evaluation.

It is envisaged that teachers and parents who work through the first two units will emerge with some form of evaluation plan. The last two units are resource documents, providing additional information for particular steps in the evaluation process.

There is no one way of using the units. Presentation will depend to a certain extent on the experience of particular teachers in the kindergarten. However, there is a clear need for a workshop leader and where there are large numbers of teachers, group work is recommended.

The following diagram outlines the general direction which is taken in the units. It is merely intended to give an overview of the evaluation process. Many of the steps interrelate or overlap and all can be modified or adapted to suit the needs of a particular kindergarten or teacher.

AN APPROACH TO EVALUATION


Whole Kindergarten
Program Level
Group work with children
Select area/issue to be evaluated
List questions to be asked for issue/area under review
Select methods of data collection
Collect data
Analyse, interpret and use data to make judgements
Make decisions based on judgements

UNIT I

PREPARING FOR EVALUATION

* Unit Rationale (p1)
* Introduction to Evaluation (p1)
* The Kindergarten Context (p2)
* Choosing an Area or Issue to be Evaluated (p3)
* Levels of Evaluation (p5)
* Summary (p7)

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UNIT RATIONALE

It is important to get away from the notion that evaluation is something new. Teachers constantly evaluate, particularly when they encounter problems and make decisions concerning individual pupils or the whole kindergarten.

The aim of this unit is to sharpen awareness of the procedures involved in the evaluation process at the kindergarten level. At the end of the unit you should have obtained a broad overview of evaluation, identified an issue or area to be evaluated, determined the level at which the evaluation will take place, and set some key questions relating to the issue or area that you are evaluating.

INTRODUCTION TO EVALUATION

In general terms, evaluation can be thought of as a process which utilizes information to make judgements and decisions. This process involves:

1. careful consideration of what information is needed before action is taken;
2. gathering of as much relevant information as possible;
3. using this information to make judgements;
4. making decisions based on these judgements.

We need to question what we are doing in kindergartens:

1. How can kindergartens develop procedures to improve the value and relevance of their own programs?
2. How can kindergartens inform the public that what they do is worthwhile?

Each of these questions uses evaluation in a particular sense:

1. for curriculum improvement;
2. for accountability;
3. for improving services to the community.

All three may be inter-connected, but it is the first, evaluation for curriculum improvement, that is of greatest relevance to kindergarten-based evaluation, and the concern of these units.

POSSIBLE APPROACHES TO EVALUATION

A variety of approaches may be taken when evaluating. Two approaches commonly used are:

1. Evaluation by kindergarten staff

   Staff alone undertake the evaluation, possibly following some form of guideline or checklist, or using knowledge gained from books or study courses.

2. Evaluation by kindergarten staff with help from an external facilitator

   The staff plan, implement and control the evaluation, making necessary judgements and decisions. The facilitator helps them design and implement the evaluation, offering added expertise and resources where necessary.

THE KINDERGARTEN CONTEXT

Whilst evaluation is a most worthwhile and useful activity for teachers who want to look at issues, solve problems and generally determine whether they are offering their children and parents the best service available at the kindergarten, it should not be undertaken without careful thought and planning.

Before contemplating evaluation on a large scale, it is important to consider the social and organisational context of the kindergarten, particularly with respect to group interaction and communication.

An evaluation may be carried out for a variety of reasons. There is likely to be more than one source of motivation and different people involved may be participating for different and even conflicting reasons.

A group of teachers identified the following possible motives for evaluation:

1. An interest in improving teaching and making a better job of meeting the needs of the pupils.

2. A desire to examine the effect of or problems introduced by new curricula or organisational changes.

3. A concern to justify or give a 'stamp of approval' to kindergarten practices in the face of criticism from parents and/or the public.

4. A response to teacher dissatisfaction with kindergarten procedures, conveyed through professional colleagues or associations.

5. A response to external pressures from other parts of the education system (often 'invisible') for a kindergarten to give an account of itself, e.g. is it an educational institution, is there a need for funds for the early childhood area.

6. A fulfilment of an obligation to report on a funded program.

7. A desire to settle conflict in the kindergarten, e.g. personalities, power, roles.

8. A desire to draw attention to forward-looking policies in the kindergarten, often for 'band-waggoning' reasons.

9. An opportunity for individuals to:

   - increase personal status
   - 'build an empire'
   - gain a promotion
   - change the balance of power
   - gain higher qualifications, e.g. an evaluation provides data for a thesis.

Obviously there are a number of conflicting motives. Unless structures are established to facilitate interaction and free-flowing discussion prior to evaluation, there is a danger that the benefits of eva' ation will be eroded by unresolved conflict.

Thus there is a need to be aware that staff require time to develop 'group' skills such as the ability to understand the behaviour and motives of others, the willingness to adapt one's own behaviour to the needs of the group involved in the task in hand, and the ability to self-reflect before undertaking an evaluation.

CHOOSING AN AREA OR ISSUE TO BE EVALUATED

You may be clear in your mind as to the area or issue you wish to evaluate, but other staff members may have different ideas or a number of areas may require review. If this is the case, then work through the following section. If your kindergarten has clearly identified an area to be evaluated, then proceed to the next section.

The following method is one way of identifying areas for evaluation and has the advantage of allowing all staff members to give opinions of equal weight. Before commencing the activity, collect the following:

Felt pens, small cards, masking tape, butcher's paper or large sheets of cardboard, a suitable place for hanging the sheets, seating (both for the large group and small groups), a recorder and a leader. Note that this method can be used with parents as well as kindergarten staff.

Step 1 (5 minutes)

Staff identify issues they are concerned about. This is an individual activity - each participant is given a card on which to briefly list issues which he/she considers to be important. These might be 'large' issues which relate to the kindergarten as a whole, e.g. parent participation programme, total curriculum, kindergarten-community relations, decision-making and communication within the kindergarten, or issues which relate to one aspect of the curriculum, e.g. in the Mathematics programme; to foster mathematical learning, areas of concern might include child assessment, records and reporting, presentation of curriculum materials, session organisation, the outdoor programme.

Step 2 (10-15 minutes)

Issues identified in Step 1 are reported to the recorder who writes them up on butcher's paper. They are clarified where necessary and linked when similar. An unlimited number of issues may be identified.
Note: If there are more than twelve people it may be better to break into two or more groups for this activity.

Step 3 (5 minutes)

Participants are asked to consider priority issues by choosing the three most important issues listed in Step 2 (these may be important because they are strengths rather than weaknesses). Each person works alone, listing the three issues on a small card.

Step 4 (10 minutes)

The group breaks into small groups (5-7 people). Using each person's list as a basis for discussion, groups consider the issues. The most important ones are noted and given to the recorder who writes them up on butcher's paper.

Step 5 (5 minutes)

The large group re-assembles. To decide the final priority list for the group each participant notes on a card, in order of importance, the six issues from the shortened list (compiled in Step 4) that he/she considers to be of greatest importance. The cards are collected by the recorder who collates and weights them, i.e. the issue ranked 1st gets three votes, the issue ranked 2nd gets two votes, and so on. The votes are tallied and the issue receiving the highest number is considered to have the highest priority for evaluation. Thus, for the example given in Step 1, kindergarten-community relations might have highest priority, the parent participation programme second highest priority, etc., or for the Mathematics Programme, the recording and reporting of results might have highest priority, curriculum materials second highest priority, etc.

This method offers the advantage of identifying a number of issues (in decreasing order of importance) which may be reviewed at a later date.

Step 6

Establish that all concerned have a similar interpretation of the issues to be evaluated.

OVERVIEW OF EVALUATION PROCESS

Levels of Evaluation

Having identified an issue for evaluation, it is often helpful to classify it according to the context in which it appears.

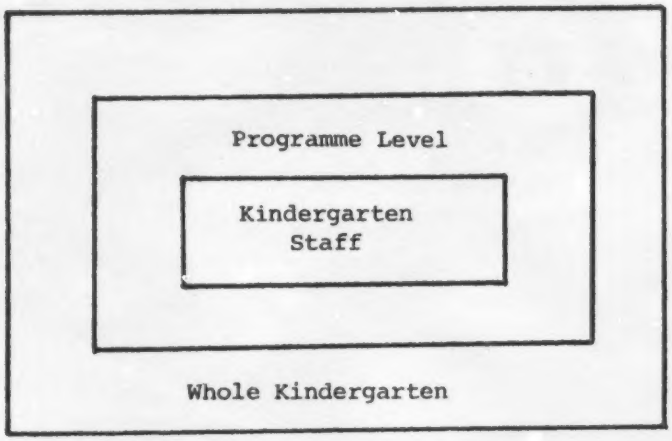
In kindergarten-based evaluation, three levels can be identified:

A - Evaluation at the individual staff level - this may arise from staff wanting to know the effectiveness of a particular feature of the activities, e.g. group work for language.

B - Evaluation at the programme level - such as a music programme.

C - Evaluation at the whole kindergarten level - concerning kindergarten as a whole, the overall provision for the well-being of children and staff, the relationship with the community on the adequacy of resources.

The distinction between the three levels is only for convenience and does not suggest that decisions made at one level do not affect what is going on at other levels. Clearly there is a close linking between levels; what is done in one area affects the whole kindergarten to some degree and vice versa (represented by the following diagram).



Consider the issue you have chosen to evaluate. At what level(s) will you be evaluating?

IDENTIFY KEY QUESTIONS ABOUT THE ISSUE OR AREA TO BE EVALUATED

1. Each participant then lists three questions he/she would like to ask about the area, e.g. Decision-making and communication -

   (i) What is the consultative structure used to help arrive at policy decisions?

   (ii) Are there adequate opportunities for all members of staff to express their views?

   (iii) How are decisions recorded and communicated?

2. Questions are given to the recorder who writes them up on butcher's paper.

3. The group links similar questions, clarifying them when necessary. Extra questions may be added to the list.

The list of key questions will serve as a focus for the collection of information.

SUMMARY

By now you should have:

1. Obtained a broad overview of evaluation;

2. Considered your kindergarten context;

3. Identified an issue or area to be evaluated;

4. Determined the level(s) at which your evaluation will take place; and

5. Set some key questions which will serve as a criteria for the issue you are evaluating.

The next step is to plan the evaluation in detail.

UNIT II

PLANNING THE EVALUATION

* Unit Rationale (p1)

* Evaluation Checklist (p1)

* Timeline for Evaluation (p6)

* Summary (p8)

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UNIT RATIONALE

Once the initial decision has been made to evaluate an area or issue in the kindergarten has been identified for evaluation, the level at which the evaluation will occur (staff, programme, whole kindergarten) has been determined and criteria have been set, the evaluation moves into the planning stage.

This unit aims to raise awareness of the issues and implications which need to be considered when planning an evaluation, and which may emerge as a result of the evaluation process. At the end of the unit you should have a clear outline of the steps to be used in the evaluation and some form of timeline/timetable for the process.

EVALUATION CHECKLIST

There is no single best way to evaluate.

There are, however, some commonsense questions which should be considered when planning any evaluation. The following questions were developed with this in mind. They are intended to be memory-joggers, to help you in planning your evaluation. They are not intended to be prescriptive, and should be adapted to suit the needs of the particular kindergarten.

Read through the following questions:

QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN PLANNING AN EVALUATION

1. Purposes

   What are the purposes of the evaluation?

   Are they expressed in specific terms, e.g. improving kindergarten morale?

   Are the purposes understood by and acceptable to all those concerned?

   Who is likely to oppose the evaluation?

2. Motivations

   Why is the evaluation being undertaken now?

   Will the evaluation meet a felt need of those involved with the kindergarten?

   Who wants to be involved in the evaluation?

Motivations (Cont'd)

Who should be involved:

- director?
- teachers?
- those with a vested interest, e.g. parents, members of the management committee, Kindergarten Union, Childhood Services Council?
- others?

3. Participants

Who will carry out evaluation:

- directors and/or advisory staff?
- teachers?
- parents?
- representatives of an outside body - e.g. consultant, management committee, director or teachers from another kindergarten?
- a combination of the above, e.g. a group consisting of teachers, a parent and a consultant?

What will be the nature of the involvement of various participants?

Will there be a representative planning team or steering committee?

Is the evaluation likely to be seen as threatening to any of the participants?

How can any perceived threat be minimised?

4. Evaluation Roles

There are a number of possible roles (not necessarily separate people):

- Evaluator (one involved in information collection and judgement).
- Facilitator (one involved in assisting an evaluation but not in judgement).
- Consultant (a person called on for special contributions to one or more aspects, e.g. assisting with interviewing only).

To what extent are such roles used in the evaluation?

Evaluation Roles (Cont'd)

Is the evaluation organised in a realistic fashion for the people involved, particularly with respect to:

- time (to obtain valid results, to maintain interest, time for organisation)?
- personnel (is the central figure organising or co-ordinating the evaluation being given time release for the activity)?
- finance?

What is the time span of the evaluation?

5. Intended Audiences

Are the audiences of the evaluation clearly defined?

What access to information will the various audiences have?

6. Area/Issue to be Evaluated

What will be evaluated:

- appropriateness of kindergarten goals?
- extent to which kindergarten goals have been achieved?
- processes, e.g. teacher/pupil interaction, parent/teacher interaction, director/teacher interaction, etc.?
- teaching strategies?
- parent participation programme?
- reporting?

7. Collection of Information

Available methods include:

- observation - structured or unstructured
- interviews - structured or unstructured
- questionnaires
- documentary analysis of reports, records, minutes, etc.
- content analysis of curriculum materials
- reports of informal discussions and conversations
- achievement tests - criterion and norm-referenced
- diaries and self-reports
- audio and video tape recordings

Are these appropriate safeguards to ensure that the information

8. Feasibility of Methods Used to Collect Information

In terms of:

- time available
- availability of personnel with the necessary expertise
- acceptability to those whose views and activities will be documented.

9. Judgements

What are the procedures for the analysis of information?

How will the information be categorised?

Are there appropriate safeguards to validate the information?

10. Release of Information

Who will have control over what is collected and reported?

What procedures will govern the collection and release of this information?

Who will have the right to reply to, correct and validate reports of the views and activities of individuals and groups?

Will all, or only part of the information be released?

11. Reports

Is the evaluation going to be reported in a form (content, style and format) which is readily available to those for whom it is designed?

Will negative aspects of the kindergarten be reported, and to whom?

Has the release date for reporting been identified?

Are different reports for different groups necessary, e.g. parents, kindergarten staff, Kindergarten Union?

12. Outcomes

Is it possible to see or to predict positive outcomes from the evaluation?

Have these outcomes been identified clearly?

What steps have been taken for ensuring that the evaluation feeds into the appropriate decision-making process?

Outcomes (Cont'd)

Are the participants aware from the beginning of the possible outcomes?

Have follow-up procedures been established to make participants aware of the actual effects of the evaluation?

13. Resources

Are particular resources needed to make the evaluation more effective:

- specialist personnel?
- secretarial assistance?
- administrative personnel?
- equipment, paper, postage?
- working space?
- time available for those staff conducting the evaluation?
- printing and media production?
- time given by parents and/or children?
- example of evaluations undertaken by other schools?
- planning guidelines for teachers?

Consider these questions with respect to the issue you identified in Unit I. Although not all questions will apply at this stage, attempt to answer as many as possible, noting ones which require further clarification or information.

To involve all teachers in the evaluation process, this can be done as a small group activity, for example:

(i) Each group (5-7 people) works through the questions and at the end of the session has a skeleton outline of the evaluation. Groups then meet and compare plans, pooling ideas to form a 'master' plan.

(ii) Certain questions are allocated to different groups, e.g. Group 1 considers questions 1-5, Group 2 questions 6-10, and so on. At the end of the session, the groups meet, combine their work and make the necessary revisions to form a 'master' plan.

TIMELINE FOR EVALUATION

Teachers who have undertaken evaluations almost unanimously identify time as the most difficult resource to manage. A number of suggestions have been made as to how this problem might be overcome:

1. Pupil-free (staff development) days for planning - if the parent body can be convinced of the value of the proposed evaluation.

2. Teacher release/relief - provided by some regional education authorities.

3. Use of external facilitator - to come into the kindergarten and provide assistance where required (could be teacher released from another kindergarten or advisory staff released from a regional office or a tertiary institution).

4. Re-ordering of kindergarten priorities.

5. Undertaking of an evaluation at a convenient time in the kindergarten year.

Teachers have found that it is important to have some form of time-line or timetable to work to, particularly when allocating tasks and co-ordinating participants' activities. For example, the timeline and timetable for a two-term evaluation might look like this:

Timeline

Term I

(i) staff discussion and decision to evaluate

(ii) selection of priority areas/issues to be reviewed by staff, with possible inputs from parents and/or children

(iii) setting up of a management committee to co-ordinate evaluation

(iv) allocation of staff to working groups to investigate a particular issue

(v) selection of methods of collecting information to answer key questions

(vi) collection of information

(vii) analysis of information; making of judgements

(viii) report writing

Term II (i) presentation of findings
(ii) discussion of findings
(iii) decision-making
(iv) implementation of decisions

Timetable

Date to Start	Activity	Date to Finish
Term 1		
Wk II Mon Staff Meeting	Staff discuss notion of evaluation, how it will affect kindergarten.	Week III Mon Staff Meeting
Wk III Wed night	Staff meeting and selection of priority issue(s) to be evaluated; identification of key questions.	Week III Wed
Wk IV Mon Staff Meeting	Appraisal of key questions - allocation of working groups to investigate setting up of Management Committee.	Week IV Mon

.... etc.

Timeline for your Evaluation

Consider the amount of time you have available for evaluation and the main issues and activities which emerged in your answers to 'Questions to Ask When Planning an Evaluation'. Attempt to plot these on a timeline (and timetable them if you can at this stage), allocating people to activities, noting resources you will require, etc.

SUMMARY

By now you should have:

1. Obtained an overview of evaluation;

2. Identified an issue or area to be evaluated;

3. Determined the level(s) at which your evaluation will take place;

4. Set some key questions which will serve as criteria for the issue you are evaluating;

5. Considered the steps involved in the evaluation process; and

6. Designed a timeline/timetable for and allocated tasks to people involved in the process.

Units III and IV, 'Methods of Gathering Information' and 'Reporting and Using Information', are resource documents, providing additional information for particular steps in the evaluation process.

EXAMPLE OF EVALUATION PLANNING

DESCRIPTION OF EVALUATION OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT

AT BERRIVILLE COMMUNITY KINDERGARTEN

INTRODUCTION

Over the past three and a half years the parent involvement and participation in all aspects of this kindergarten has increased considerably. Figures recorded for the period 11.2.80 to 30.3.80 revealed that 69% of families who had children attending kindergarten were involved, and for the period 1.4.80 to 30.6.80, 77% involvement. This involvement of families would have been in one or more of the following areas:

Committees;

Helping in kindergarten, i.e. laundry, looking after pets, library roster, working with children in the centre;

Discussion groups;

Excursions and activity night.

The increase over the three and a half years is believed to be due to a deliberate effort to utilize the partnership of parent and staff in working together towards the well-being of the child.

It was felt to be vitally important that parents understand what the kindergarten is doing, the reasons for the activities and experiences provided for the children, and that staff should get to know and understand the values and life styles of the parents before both parties could work together successfully. Consequently, staff used every opportunity possible to share with parents information and experiences relating to child development, child management and how children learn.

A warm friendly atmosphere was provided and parents were encouraged to join in and participate.

With the large percentage of parent involvement in the total programme, plus one staff member's time being halved due to a drop in population, extra work load was added to all staff members. Parents enjoyed and expected all services to continue, and while staff believed that they should, questions arose relating to the value of such involvement.

The Kindergarten Union arranged a workshop on planning in evaluation, with teachers and evaluators. During this workshop participants re-wrote a booklet on evaluation to suit kindergarten conditions in general and also designed two specific plans for evaluation which could be implemented at the centres where the participating directors were based. This document outlines the method adopted in evaluating the effectiveness of the Parent Involvement Programme at Berriville Community Kindergarten as it related to the staff goals and objectives for children.

AIMS AND RATIONALE OF PROGRAMME

1. To provide experiences for children to help them understand their world (immediate environment, home and community) by:

   (a) Excursions to dairy farms, zoo, shops, etc.

   (b) People in the community visiting us - police, firemen, etc.

   (c) Having pets in the centre to care for.

   (d) Involvement of families, parents, siblings, grandparents, babies.

   (e) Weekly topic with pictures, and related materials on the topic on display.

   (f) Providing opportunities and materials for dramatic play with staff extending or enriching the play where necessary.

   (g) Stories told or read.

   (h) Having books readily available to children.

   (i) Adults in the centre using resource books with the children.

2. To provide opportunities to develop the whole child through:

   (a) First-hand experiences in social relationships: by learning to play with others, to share, take turns, to show interest in others, to consider others and their property and to co-operate; and to abide by the kindergarten rules.

   (b) Physical development of large and small muscles:

Large muscles	-	climbing, jumping, running, hammering, etc.
Small muscles	-	clay dough, cutting, pasting, puzzles, painting, turning pages, etc.
Hand-eye co-ordination	-	threading, hammering, pouring, writing, puzzles, blocks, etc.

(c) Finding acceptable outlets for emotions:
Messy activities - clay, finger-paint, water, sand, soil, etc.
Vigorous physical activities.
Physical contact from a warm friendly adult.

(d) Experiences to promote intellectual development:
Activities which enlarge existing concepts and develop new ones; concepts relating to mathematics, subsumed in science, social studies, music, etc.

(e) Encouraging children to think, analyse problems and arrive at different possible solutions, by questioning, posing problems and allowing time for experimentation.

(f) Encouraging children to express themselves through materials, movement and language by providing time and opportunity to:
Use a wide variety of art media - paint, clay, collage, wood, etc.

Experiment with a variety of musical instruments, taped music and experiences to music including puppets.

Offer the children a stimulating environment and rich experiences.

(g) Stimulating language through hearing and using language:
For all adults in the centre to interact with the children and show an interest in their activities.
By providing good, clear speech models.
By reading and telling stories and verse.

(h) Developing an awareness of the senses by:
Tasting a variety of foods, cooked and uncooked, smelling food, flowers, leaves, etc.
Feeling a variety of textures.
Developing listening skills.
Becoming aware of the world around them, paying attention to small detail - ants, worms, twigs, clouds, etc.

(i) Helping them build a good self-concept, encouraging independence and confidence:
By praising their efforts.
By reacting positively towards them in a warm and friendly manner.
By providing opportunities for them to do things for themselves.
By giving them responsibilities.

(j) Developing a sense of curiosity:
By asking questions and encouraging them to explore, discover the answers for themselves through experimentation and/or from reference resources - books, people, animals, etc.

3. For the staff at all times to respect children as individuals and meet their needs:

   (a) By listening and talking with them.

   (b) By extending them through matching activities with their development.

   (c) By being a resource person, friend, comforter, nurse and teacher, and supporting and encouraging them as much as possible in all they do.

PRELIMINARY PROCEDURE

The Director suggested to the Teacher and the Aide that she would like to evaluate aspects of the current Kindergarten programme, and asked whether they would be prepared to take part. They agreed.

Reasons for the evaluation given to the staff were to assess:

(a) The effectiveness of the Parent Involvement Programme.

(b) Whether the goals and objectives of the programme for the children were being communicated to parents.

(c) The effectiveness of the current methods used to communicate goals.

(d) How the parents viewed the Kindergarten.

Information shared and discussed with the staff about the evaluation process included:

(a) How information would be collected.

(b) Who would be involved in collecting and collating data.

(c) Understanding that all information gained would be the property of the staff, who could veto release of detailed information, e.g. only a report of general findings need be released and a statement on what staff intend to do as a result of the findings.

(d) How the findings of an evaluation could help staff in their work with families in the kindergarten.

At a Management Committee Meeting, the Director presented a report on the suggested Evaluation Programme, which included the information which had been discussed by the staff. The Committee discussed the proposal and decided to give the programme their full support.

It was decided that a Steering Committee of three should be set comprising a representative from staff, parents, Regional Office, and that three staff, three parents, and the Regional Advisor should make up the evaluation team.

The Director chose the three parents, one of which was to be on the Steering Committee. Each parent was asked personally if they would like to be involved.

Parents were chosen for the following reasons:

(a) Involvement in the kindergarten already.

(b) Interest in the educational programme for children.

(c) Availability of time.

(d) Tolerance of other life-styles.

(e) To provide a diversity of knowledge and expertise.

The Steering Committee met and discussed:

(a) Evaluation.

(b) How information would be obtained.

(c) Who should collect the information.

(d) The instruments to be used for data collection.

(e) The time-table for information collection.

It was decided at this meeting that the Director would write the reports on the families in the sample, from information gained at enrolment interview, from kindergarten records and through informal discussions.

The staff would plan the area for observation, as it had to be carried out in a 'normal' situation so that parents were not aware they were being observed, thus affecting results. Each staff member would also keep a diary of the ways in which they communicated the goals to other adults in the centre for a period of one week.

The parents were to meet to discuss further the goals and objectives and plan the type of questions they were to ask in the unstructured interviews. It was decided that the parents would be responsible for handing out, collecting and collating the questionnaires.

The Regional Adviser was to be a resource person available when needed in any or all areas.

A timetable for evaluation was planned and is detailed on next page.

Date Schedule	Task
Early June	Agreement of Staff
Mid June	Agreement of Management
Early July	Agreement of Parents
July 28th to August 27th	Data Collection
- July 28th - August 4th	Structured Observations
- August 4th - August 11th	Unstructured Interviews
- August 11th - August 25th	Director's Reports, Staff Diary, Questionnaires
September	Data Analysis
October	Reports

METHOD OF COLLECTING DATA

1. *Reports*

Reports of information gained from enrolment interview, kindergarten records, informal discussions, would be compiled by the Director.

2. *Structured Observations* (see Appendix I)

Observations of parents working with children would be carried out by staff. Parents would not be aware of being observed as it was usual for staff to record children's behaviour throughout the session for their planning records.

3. *Unstructured Interviews* (see Appendix II)

Parents on the evaluating team would conduct these interviews. It was felt that parents in the sample would be honest in their answers to another parent rather than to a staff member.

4. *Diary*

For one week, each member would keep a diary recording situations when they communicated goals and objectives to parents.

5. *Questionnaire* (see Appendix III)

The questionnaire would be distributed and collected by the parents on the evaluating team. A letter explaining the evaluation programme, written by the parent members of the evaluating team, would accompany the questionnaire (see Appendix IV).

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

A sample of 15 families were chosen at random by putting 55 family names in a hat and drawing 15 out.

Reports

Reports were compiled from records of attendance at:

(a) Coffee pot discussion groups.

(b) Excursions.

(c) Help in kindergarten sessions.

(d) Help in library.

(e) Help with committee work.

(f) Help with preparation of newsletters and displays.

(g) From information given at interviews and informal discussions.

Structured Observations

Parents in the sample were asked to help in the centre with the children. The parents were observed over the whole session and each staff member who was present recorded for approximately one hour, then handed over to the next staff member.

Unstructured Interviews

Each parent on the evaluation team was given the names of five people and asked not to reveal who they were to one another. As soon as data came to hand, it was coded using a number. To ensure confidentiality, names and numbers were only known by the Director. The people collating the data would have no idea of the identity of the people in the sample.

Diary

Each staff member kept a diary for one week.

Areas where staff saw that goals might be communicated were:

(a) Discussions with parents.

(b) Modelling behaviours, language, etc.

(c) Interviews.

(d) Involving parents in activities.

(e) Preparation of newsletters, posters and displays with parents.

(f) Through the playgroup held during session time.

(g) Notice board displaying programme for the week.

Questionnaire

These were given to each parent in the sample together with a letter explaining the evaluation programme and asking for their co-operation. Each parent in the evaluation team was responsible for collecting the questionnaires when they were completed.

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

According to the results from the questionnaires, all parents felt that they were aware of the staff goals and objectives. They signified that they had gained this information from a variety of sources, the main ones, in order of importance, being:

(a) Watching staff working with children.

(b) Discussions with staff.

(c) Details of the weekly topic displayed on the notice board.

The majority of the parents considered that their children had developed significantly in accordance with the long-term goals and objectives of the kindergarten.

All parents felt that the kindergarten had helped them personally.

Observation data suggests that parents were genuinely interested in the children. They were warm and approving in their interactions with the children and sensitive to their emotional needs.

The realisation of the importance of the use of descriptive language with the children, the understanding of the purpose of activities and the educational aspects of the programme were high where particular parents had either:

(a) Attended a discussion group on the topic;

(b) It had been discussed in a newsletter; or

(c) They had discussed that particular aspect of the programme with a staff member.

Although staff members were aware of the importance of modelling, this evaluation showed the effects to be more widespread than they had realised.

APPENDIX I

OBSERVATIONS

1. Language used (i.e. open ended questions, descriptive language).

AREA COMMENTS

2. Shows understanding of activity (i.e. the value of finger painting).

AREA COMMENTS

3. Allows independence (i.e. allows child to do things for himself).

AREA COMMENTS

4. Allows child to express himself/herself (in painting, language, music, etc.).

AREA COMMENTS

5. Sensitive to feelings (i.e. shy, upset, anxious, etc.).

AREA COMMENTS

6. Allows for experimentation (doesn't interfere, or show how).

AREA COMMENTS

7. Reacts positively to children (warm, praises efforts).

AREA COMMENTS

8. Shows genuine interest in the children and their activities (undivided attention, etc.).

AREA COMMENTS

APPENDIX II

QUESTIONS ASKED BY PARENTS TO PARENTS IN UNSTRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

1. Have you noticed any changes in your child since attending kindergarten?

   What are they?

2. As a mother, what benefits have you gained from our kindergarten?

APPENDIX III

BERRIVILLE COMMUNITY KINDERGARTEN QUESTIONNAIRE

(Adapted from Mt. Druitt Early Childhood Project Evaluation of Bidwell Community School's Pre-school Programmes 1979)

Has kindergarten helped your child to:	No	A Little	Quite A Bit	A Lot	Very Much
Make friends with others					
Co-operate with adults					
Become more independent					
Develop confidence					
Be more curious					
Think for himself/herself					
Develop physically, i.e. in climbing, pasting, hammering					
To concentrate for a longer time					
Communicate clearly					
Count					
Recognise colours and shapes					
Learn new words					
Learn new songs and rhymes					
Talk about how he/she feels					
Talk about experiences					
Engage in creative activities, i.e. painting, drawing, etc.					
Be aware of things around him/her					
Enjoy Books					
Enjoy music					
Enjoy puzzles					
Has your child's going to kindergarten helped you					

APPENDIX III (Cont'd)

QUESTIONNAIRE

	No	A Little	Quite A Bit	A Lot	Very Much
Are you aware of the staff's aims and objectives for your child?					
Did you gain this information from:					
Discussion groups (1) Coffee Pot					
" " (2) Playgroup					
Enrolment interview					
Enrolment information leaflet					
Watching staff working with children					
Kindergarten notice board:					
(1) Weekly topic					
(2) Other information displayed					
While helping at kindergarten					
Through playgroup					
Discussions with the staff					
Discussions with other parents					
Parent library					
Excursions					
Activity nights					
Playgroup Committee					
Kindergarten Committees					
Working bees					

APPENDIX IV

BERRIVILLE COMMUNITY KINDERGARTEN

Dear Parent,

Attached is a questionnaire we would like you to fill in as honestly as possible. Only if you do this can we gain full benefit from this evaluation.

The Kindergarten staff are trying to evaluate their programme to see if the Kindergarten is providing opportunities to develop the child as a whole. To see if the child's needs to develop physically, emotionally, intellectually and socially are being met.

It is only by asking ourselves questions that we can find the strengths and weaknesses in our methods so we can grow and help our children to face life, with all its joys and sorrows.

Yours sincerely,

on behalf of Parents and Staff.